

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 SES-01 EUR-08 SP-02
PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 PA-01 MCT-01
SY-02 EB-04 HA-02 SMS-01 /052 W
-----075395 101434Z /46

P R 101304Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 245
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEHRAN 08614

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, IR
SUBJ: SITUATION IN IRAN

1. DURING PAST THREE DAYS, I HAVE MET WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER ASHRAF, EDUCATION MINISTER NAHAVANDI (LEADER
OF LARGEST BLOC IN CURRENT GOVT), SENIOR MILITARY
OFFICERS, AND HAD AN AUDIENCE OF OVER AN HOUR WITH THE
SHAH. IT MAY BE USEFUL FOR DEPT AND INFO ADDRESSEES
TO HAVE SOME FLAVOR OF THESE DISCUSSIONS.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WHOM I MET SEPT 8, SHORTLY
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AFTER DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW, SPENT MOST OF OUR
MEETING EXPLAINING AND JUSTIFYING THE INTRODUCTION OF
MARTIAL LAW. SINCE THE MEETING WAS AT HIS REQUEST, HE
WAS WELL PREPARED WITH COPIES OF STATEMENTS MADE BY
OPPOSITION, WITH TEXTS OF BANNERS DISPLAYED IN MANI-
FESTATION SEPT 7, AND WITH RATIONALE FOR GOVT ACTION.
HE WAS UNWILLING TO CONCEDE ANY DEFICIENCIES ON THE

PART OF THE SHAH OR THE GOVT AND PERSISTED IN
DEPICTING THE DISTURBANCES AS FOREIGN-INSPIRED. HE
SHOWED LITTLE SENSITIVITY TO THE DEATHS THAT HAD
OCCURRED IN THE CLASHES EARLIER THAT DAY AND INSISTED
THAT NO MORE THAN TEN HAD DIED. (HE LATER TELEPHONED
ME AT HOME TO CHANGE THAT FIGURE TO "ABOUT 100.")
HE SEEMED EAGER TO HAVE AN OFFICIAL U.S. REACTION TO
EVENTS AND ASKED IF I HAD ANY VIEWS ABOUT NEXT STEPS
IRAN MIGHT TAKE.

3. EDUCATION MINISTER NAHAVANDI, BY CONTRAST, INDICATED
GREAT CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF MARTIAL LAW.
DURING SEPT 9 MEETING (WHICH WAS HELD AT MY REQUEST) HE
CONTINUED TO RECEIVE TELEPHONE REPORTS ON VARIOUS
POCKETS OF VIOLENCE THROUGHOUT CITY. HE SAID CABINET
MEETING NIGHT OF SEPT 7 WHICH HAD DECIDED ON
MARTIAL LAW HAD BEEN AN EMOTIONAL ONE, AND HAD BEEN
HELD UPON THE INSISTENCE OF THE MILITARY. HE SAID HE
AND HIS GROUP HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT THESIS THAT
"FOREIGNERS" HAD CAUSED ALL RECENT DISTURBANCES AND
HAD PROPOSED SWEEPING REFORMS ("NETTOYAGE TOTALE").
HE OBVIOUSLY FEELS THAT HIS VIEWS HAVE NOT RPT NOT
BEEN ADEQUATELY ACCEPTED AND HAS ISSUED A PUBLIC
STATEMENT SAYING THAT REFORMS MUST FOLLOW MARTIAL
LAW.

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4. HE THEN WENT ON TO MAKE "ONE OBSERVATION INFANTILE."
HE SAID THE UNITED STATES GOVT COULD PLAY A KEY ROLE IN
CURRENT SITUATION. PERHAPS WE HAD MORE INFLUENCE WITH
SHAH THAN THE GOVT DID. WE SHOULD ACT TO USE THAT
INFLUENCE. "FAITES VITE."

5. IN TALKING TO SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS, I FIND THEM,
ON THE SURFACE, EXPRESSING GREAT SATISFACTION WITH
DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW. THEY, LIKE THE FOREIGN MINISTER
EXPAND AT GREAT LENGTH ON THE MALICIOUS
INTENTIONS OF THE DEMONSTRATORS AND THE EXTENT OF THE
THREAT TO THE NATION. IN THE COURSE OF DETAILED
DISCUSSION, HOWEVER, THEY DISPLAY REAL NERVOUSNESS
ABOUT FUTURE COURSE OF EVENTS. THEY EXPECT TERRORISM,
SABOTAGE, AND INDUSTRIAL STRIKES. THEY WERE CLEARLY
SHAKEN BY THE SIZE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS,
PARTICULARLY THAT OF SEPT 7.

6. AS FOR THE SHAH, WHOM I MET SEPT 10, I FOUND HIM
TIRED AND UNHAPPY, BUT CONSIDERABLY MORE SPIRITED THAN
HE WAS A WEEK AGO. HE DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLY GREATER

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SENSITIVITY TO THE DEATHS THAT HAD OCCURRED THAN DID
HIS FOREIGN MINISTER. HE PERSISTS IN SAYING THAT HE
SEES THE SOVIET HAND IN ALL THE DEMONSTRATIONS AND
DISTURBANCES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE. AT THE SAME TIME,
HE SAYS THAT "PAST MISTAKES" MUST BE CORRECTED. HE SAYS
HE HAS ORDERED A CAMPAIGN AGAINST CORRUPTION.
NINE ARRESTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE AND WILL SHORTLY BE
ANNOUNCED. MORE ASSISTANCE WILL BE GIVEN THE COUNTRYSIDE.
THE PROCESS OF LIBERALIZATION WILL CONTINUE. LEGIS-
LATION ON FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND OF PRESS WILL BE
INTRODUCED INTO THE PARLIAMENT. THE ELECTIONS
WILL BE HELD-AS FREE ELECTIONS-IN JUNE.
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7. HE IS EAGER FOR SOME PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR HIM, FOR HIS REGIME, AND FOR HIS PROGRAM. HE HAS A MORE COHERENT PLAN OF ACTION THAN HE EARLIER DISPLAYED. HE CATEGORICALLY ESCHEWS ANY SUGGESTION THAT HE WILL ABDICATE OR FLEE THE CURRENT SITUATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE DOES NOT MINIMIZE THE PROBLEMS HE FACES. HE REALIZES THAT MARTIAL LAW MAY FORCE HIS OPPOSITION UNDERGROUND AND INTO ACTS OF TERRORISM AND SABOTAGE. HE IS CONCERNED THAT A WAVE OF INDUSTRIAL STRIKES MAY BE IN THE OFFING. HE APPRECIATES THAT THE IMAGE OF MARTIAL LAW WILL BE OFFENSIVE TO MANY INTERNATIONALLY, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES.

8. THE NET IMPRESSION I DERIVE FROM THESE SEVERAL INTERVIEWS IS THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT IN IRAN IS BADLY SHAKEN BY RECENT EVENTS. THERE IS STILL A STRONG ELEMENT, NOT ONLY IN THE MILITARY, BUT ALSO IN THE CABINET WHICH FAVORS THE RETURN TO A HARSH, AUTHORITARIAN ROLE TO SUPPRESS THE OPPOSITION. THERE IS, AT THE SAME TIME, A SIGNIFICANT GROUP IN THE LEADERSHIP THAT BELIEVES REPRESSIVE ACTION WILL NOT WORK AND THAT THE TIME IS OVERDUE FOR ACTIONS WHICH WILL MEET LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES. THE SHAH, IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, HAS PLAYED A HAMLET-LIKE ROLE, WITHOUT ASSERTING HIS INFLUENCE IN EITHER DIRECTION. HE SEEMS, AS OF TODAY, TO HAVE RECOVERED SOME OF HIS FORMER CONFIDENCE AND TO HAVE RESUMED CONTROL OF GOVERNMENTAL ACTION. HE IS CONVINCING WHEN HE SAYS THAT HE HAS SIDED WITH THOSE WHO WANT REFORM AND WE CAN EXPECT HIM TO ATTEMPT TO CARRY OUT THOSE CHANGES.

9. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY, HOWEVER, TO ESTIMATE WHETHER
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HE WILL BE ABLE TO DO WHAT HE SAYS HE WANTS TO DO WHILE HE IS SADDLED WITH THE HUBRIS OF A SULLEN POPULATION CHAFING AT THE IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW.
SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN08614
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780368-1401
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780983/aaaacqgh.tel
Line Count: 213
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: cf6b7053-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1489770
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN IRAN
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, IR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cf6b7053-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014